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(71) Applicant: NOKIA MOBILE PHONES LIMITED
[FI/FI]; Keilalahdentie 4, FIN-02150 Espoo (FI).

(72) Inventors: WYCHERLEY, Mark; 23 Wingfield Gardens, Frimley, Camberley, Surrey GU16 9QD (GB). LOBO, Dominic; Bowood, Mill Lane, Crondall, Farnham, Surrey GU10 5RP (GB). KAARTINEN, Kalevi; Karl-Klockenhoff-Weg 7, 40699 Erkrath (DE).

(74) Agents: JONES, Kendra et al.; Nokia IPR Department, Nokia House, Summit Avenue, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 0NG (GB).

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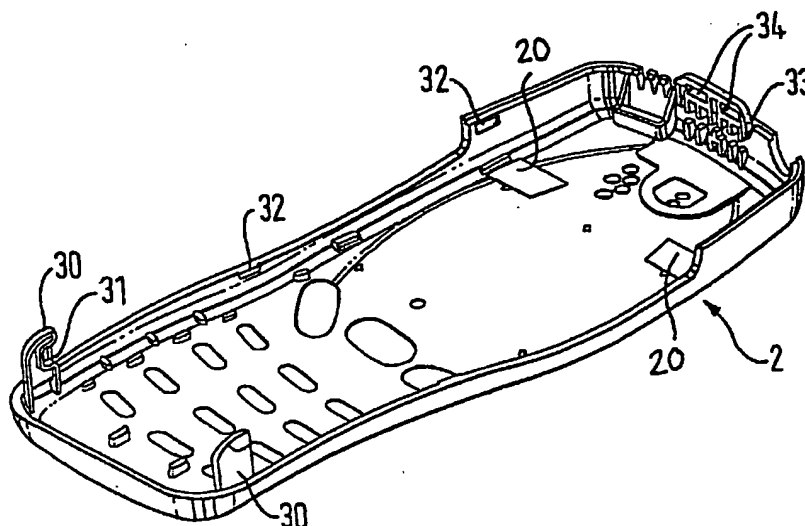
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(54) Title: REMOVABLE HOUSING COVER FOR A PORTABLE RADIO COMMUNICATION DEVICE



(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to a removable housing cover that is adapted to be detachably connectable to a mobile phone, the removable cover having a distinguishing identity means associated therewith, and the phone having a sensor for sensing the distinguishing identity means of the removable cover and a processor controlling the operating characteristics of the device, the arrangement being such that in use the removable housing cover is mounted on the phone and the sensor senses the identity means and outputs a sensed parameter of the identity means to the processor, wherein the processor is responsive to the sensed parameter to change selected ones of the operating characteristics of the phone. In this way, changing the phone cover causes a change in the internal operating characteristics of the phone.



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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

Removable housing cover for a portable radio communication device

The present invention relates to a portable radio communication device, and more particularly to a removable cover therefor.

Removable covers, such as that disclosed in the Applicant's UK patent number 2, 324, 929, afford an end-user of a mobile phone disclosed in the said patent application the facility to swap the front housing cover of the mobile phone with a different front cover housing selected by the user as he or she wishes. In this way, the end-user is empowered to replace the housing cover if he or she wishes to change the appearance of the mobile phone, or to substitute a broken or scratched housing cover, in both cases without having to employ the services of a skilled technician.

Against this background, the present invention provides a removable housing cover adapted to be detachably connectable to a portable radio communication device, the removable cover having an identity means associated therewith, and the portable radio communication device having a sensor for sensing the identity means of the removable cover and a processor controlling the operating characteristics of the device, the arrangement being such that in use the removable housing cover is mounted on the portable radio communication device and the sensor senses the identity means and outputs a sensed parameter of the identity means to the processor, wherein the processor is responsive to the sensed parameter so as to change selected ones of the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device.

Expressed alternately, the present invention resides in a removable housing cover for a portable radio communication device, the removable housing cover having associated therewith certain operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device, wherein when the removable cover is attached to the portable radio communication device the removable cover is

adapted to reconfigure the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device in accordance with the operating characteristics associated with the removable cover.

By means of this invention, the user of the portable radio communication device is able himself/herself not only to change the outward appearance of the phone, but also to alter certain operating characteristics of the device, both being made possible by simply replacing one housing cover with another different housing cover. That is to say, different removable housing covers have different portable radio communication device operating characteristics associated therewith, and by replacing covers the user can change the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device in line with the new replaceable housing cover. This leads to an increased sense of personalization and customisation of a user's portable radio communication device, eg mobile phone.

In a preferred embodiment, there is a consistent link or theme shared between the removable cover and the configuration software associated with the cover. In this way, the "personality" of the mobile phone can be completely changed from housing cover to housing cover, because the housing cover and configuration software together combine to impart to the phone an integrated, unitary user interface. In short, the invention allows the ability to associate aspects of the operating characteristics of the phone such as sounds and/or graphics with different phone covers.

In general terms, the approach taken in the present invention is as follows. The removable housing cover is provided with some form of identity means in the form of a distinguishing identity feature. When the user wishes to change the user interface he/she removes the housing cover currently attached to the phone for example by using the releasable attachment means described in the Applicant's patent referenced above the releasable attachment aspects of which are incorporated herein by reference. Then the new housing cover that

the user wishes to install onto the phone is located onto the phone and secured in position, again making use of the releasable attachment means. Once in place, the distinguishing identity feature of the removable housing cover comes into registration with a sensor reader provided on the phone. When the sensor reads the distinguishing identity feature of the removable housing cover (for instance when the phone is powered up, or simply when the phone detects a change of cover), this enables the operating characteristics of the phone to be altered in agreement with the distinguishing identity feature of the removable housing cover.

For instance, a user may purchase a removable housing cover of his/her favourite musical band. The removable housing cover may have graphics associated with the band printed thereon, such as the band's logo, thus changing the look of the phone to depict the user's favourite musical band. On connecting the housing cover to the phone, the phone is enabled with the ability to alter various operating characteristics thereof in line with aspects related to the musical band, e.g. the start-up menu may now have the band's logo or the ring tone may now jingle along with one of the band's hits. The user interface is thereby fully adapted to reflect the user's musical tastes and presents an integrated and unitary visual and operational interface of the musical band.

In order to aid a more detailed understanding of the present invention, various embodiments of the invention will now be described. These should not be construed as necessarily limiting the invention but merely as examples of specific ways of putting the invention into effect. In particular, the invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the reverse side of a removable cover of an embodiment of the present invention, and Figure 2 is a perspective view of the upper side of a portable radio communication device of an embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 1 shows an embodiment of the present invention in the form of a removable cover 2 for a mobile phone. The removable cover 2 has graphics and other indicia printed on its outward-facing surface. In this embodiment, the removable cover 2 is the front cover of the mobile phone. Of course, in other embodiments the removable cover may be the back cover of the phone. For complete visual subscription to a particular theme, both the front and back covers could be removably attachable to the mobile phone, in which case both front and back covers could carry graphics relating the particular theme in question. These could be removably attachable to the phone in the manner disclosed in Applicant's pending patent application number GB 9903260.9, the releasable attachment aspects of which are incorporated herein by reference, and comprise complementary inter-engaging connection elements shown in Figures 1 and 2 numbered 30 to 34 and 27 to 29. In this way, the appearance of the whole phone would reflect the theme.

The removable cover is provided with an identity means in the form of distinguishing identity feature. In one form, the distinguishing identity feature consists in a memory chip patch that carries data associated with the particular removable cover. Other forms for the distinguishing identity feature will be described later. The memory chip is embedded during manufacture in the inside surface of the removable cover as illustrated in Figure 1 at reference numerals 20; there may be two of these as illustrated, or more, or just one.

When a new removable cover is installed onto the phone and secured in position, the memory chip patches of the removable housing cover are brought into registration with a sensor in the form of a reader, indicated at reference numerals 22 in Figure 2, provided in the phone. This reader detects the memory chip patches of the removable housing cover and proceeds to read data from it. In other words, an analogue or digital input (provided by the distinguishing identity feature) is provided to allow for

sensing (done by the reader) the type of cover that has been attached to the phone.

In this embodiment, the reader reads the memory chip carrying the distinguishing identity feature and certain predefined parameters of the removable housing cover, and transfers this data to a controller/processor of the mobile phone. This transfer of data leads to the operating characteristics of the phone being altered in agreement with the distinguishing identity feature of the removable housing cover. By operating characteristics is meant aspects of the phone relating primarily, but not exclusively, to its set-up such as ring tones, stand-by and wake-up animations, etc. These include, in a non-limiting way, the following:

1. Ring tones and musical alerts.

For example, changing the cover causes a change in the available ring-tones or audible alerts.

2. Animations/screen savers.

For example, changing the cover causes a change in the available graphics.

3. Mode (manner, bag, etc).

For example, changing the cover causes the phone to enter into silent mode, setting vibration alert only.

4. Bookmarks, browser preferences.

For example, changing the cover causes a change in the bookmarks associated with the user's browser services.

5. Phone memory preferences.

For example, changing the cover changes the available electronic telephone directory.

6. Games or game elements, levels, more players, replenishment of consumable items (e.g. bullets etc).

In this way, the removable cover configures selected aspects of the phone's internal operating (or behavioural) characteristics to support the external visual/mechanical characteristics. With changing removable covers, so the internal configurations may be changed.

Other forms that could be taken by the distinguishing identity feature, and associated methods for detection of the cover identity include the following:

1. Mechanical pegs provided on the inner surface of the removable cover inwardly extending therefrom. The pegs in use cause pressing on a switch provided on the phone surface such that the presence or absence of each peg allows for predetermined cover options. For instance a single peg on a cover that presses on a switch could give two types of cover/phone configuration. Similarly, two pegs could afford four types of configurations.
2. Resistance sensor provided on the removable cover in association with a potential divider on the phone fed to analogue to digital conversion input.
3. Optical sensor provided on the phone that detects the reflectivity, or material density, or translucence of variable pegs provided on the removable cover of variable width/thickness/reflectivity pegs.
4. Magnetic sensor on the phone measuring the field strength/direction of a corresponding magnetic identity feature provided on the removable cover.
5. Silicon memory or processor chip that is provided on the removable cover and read at power-on only, and then power-off so that there is no detrimental impact on standby time.

6. Holographic identity feature on the removable cover and a holographic reader on the phone.

Each of the examples given above inherently has different levels of complexity and capability.

Furthermore, there are a number of different ways the present invention provides for enabling different internal configurations (i.e. operating characteristics) for the mobile phone.

In one arrangement, the mobile phone can be provided with a plurality of pre-stored internal configurations already included in the phone. This pre-storing could be carried out and fixed by the phone manufacturer. When a particular removable cover is attached to the phone, the distinguishing identity feature is read from the removable cover and a corresponding one of the pre-stored internal configurations is selected from the plurality of pre-stored internal configurations already included in the phone. In other words, the affixing of a chosen removable cover to the phone enables the selection of the related internal configuration from the pre-stored catalogue of internal configurations already included in the phone. In such an arrangement, there is an identifiable and enabling pre-determined link between the distinguishing identity feature and the corresponding pre-stored internal configurations.

Alternatively, the internal configurations could be pre-stored at phone manufacturer and be selectable by a user to fit with a particular cover combination. With the removable cover in place on the phone, the user could select, using menu driven options, from a range of pre-programmed internal configurations internal configurations which internal configuration he/she would like to be used in conjunction with the particular removable cover in place.

In another arrangement, the internal configurations could be retrieved/downloaded from a remote server/network such as an internet website. In this arrangement the distinguishing identity feature is read from the cover and is sent to the internet website. In response, the internet website downloads to the mobile phone a new internal configuration associated with the removable cover. I.e. when the user changes the removal cover an auto download is executed (using for example WAP) to provide a new internal configuration to go with that particular removable cover that has been attached. In this arrangement the initiation steps of reading and transferring data between the removable cover and the phone is instructed by the internet website. The arrangement could be such that the cover identity draws new configurations to be uploaded to the phone from the internet website when available at the website, for example even on a daily basis. Downloading could be from an internet server of the phone manufacturer server or from a server of a third party, such as an operator or content provider, who supplies the removable cover in question.

So in the example previously given of the musical band, the attachment of a removable cover relating to the musical band may enable the user access to the band's website, maybe for music downloads.

In a still further embodiment, the operating characteristics of the phone are determined by predefined "Profiles" options. "Profiles" define a group of operating characteristics linked to a given mode or environment in which the mobile phone is to be used. For example, in an "Meetings Profile" the mobile phone could be set to a low volume ring tone or vibration alert only, in case the user is participating in a meeting and doesn't wish to interrupt the meeting but does wish to be aware of any incoming calls. In contrast, in a "Home Profile" the mobile phone could be set to a high volume ring tone. Other modes could be related to other environments in which the phone may be used, for instance "Silent Profile" may be advantageous for use in a theatre or cinema.

In this embodiment, the removable cover of the present invention is associated with the desired Profile. That is to say, different Profiles would be linked to different removable covers. For example, for out-of-doors use there may a Profiles setting called "Outside" and this Profile could be associated with a bright coloured cover so that when the bright coloured cover is placed onto the mobile phone the "Outside" Profile is selected. Associated with the "Outside" cover may a mobile phone set up which includes a high volume ringing tone and the diversion of company calls (defined via e.g. Caller Groups) to the user's mailbox. Accordingly, when the bright coloured cover is attached to the mobile phone the user immediately recognises that the Outside Profile is enabled on the mobile phone. Alternatively, a dark coloured cover could be used to signify an "Office" profile for Office use and thus when placed on the mobile phone enables a phone set up that initiates Office Profile which enables a low volume ringing tone and the diversion of private calls (again e.g. by Caller Group definition) automatically to the user's mail box.

Hence, by means of this embodiment the user can quickly and conveniently change the Profiles setting of his/her mobile phone. Also, the user at any time just by looking at the mobile phone knows immediately which Profile setting is currently activated without the need to check the display or navigate through the phones menu options.

The different Profiles' removable cases may be provided with unique respective mechanical switch actuators that when mounted on the mobile phone close unique combinations of switches provided thereon. In this way, different Profiles are activated depending on the different switching positions. Alternatively, a memory chip could be integrated into removable cover, the chip carrying data relating to a Profiles Setting, which on mounting on the phone could be read by a phone's sensor and installed onto the phone.

Of course, menu changing of Profiles should also be possible despite the presence of a particular Profiles cover. In other words, the user should be still able to change the profile manually when he/she does not have at hand a particular desired phone cover for the particular situation.

The present invention has application in a wide range of product, service and corporate branding for example in e-commerce, e-banking, music distribution, product promotion etc. Additionally, the removable covers could encompass themes include seasonal covers or event covers. Game covers could be easily snapped on by the user which for instance automatically sets up the installation of a new game on the mobile phone/handset, or offers replenishments.

Accordingly, the present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from its essential attributes. Reference should thus be made to the appended claims and other general statements herein rather than to the foregoing description as indicating the scope of invention.

Furthermore, each feature disclosed in this specification (which term includes the claims) and/or shown in the drawings may be incorporated in the invention independently of other disclosed and/or illustrated features. In this regard, the invention includes any novel feature or combination of features disclosed herein either explicitly or any generalisation thereof irrespective of whether or not it relates to the claimed invention or mitigates any or all of the problems addressed.

The appended abstract as filed herewith is included in the specification by reference.

CLAIMS

1. A removable housing cover adapted to be detachably connectable to a portable radio communication device, the removable cover having an identity means associated therewith, and the portable radio communication device having a sensor for sensing the identity means of the removable cover and a processor for controlling the operating characteristics of the device, the arrangement being such that in use the removable housing cover is mounted on the portable radio communication device and the sensor senses the identity means and outputs a sensed parameter of the identity means to the processor, wherein the processor is responsive to the sensed parameter so as to change selected ones of the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device.
2. A removable housing cover according to claim 1, wherein the portable radio communication device is provided with a plurality of pre-defined and pre-stored operating characteristic configurations, and the processor is operable to change the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device by selecting one of the pre-defined and pre-stored configurations in accordance with a corresponding pre-defined sensed parameter of the identity means.
3. A removable housing cover according to claim 2, wherein the identity means causes the processor to change the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device by selecting one or more of the plurality of operating characteristics pre-defined and pre-stored on the portable radio communication device.
4. A removable housing cover according to claim 1, wherein the identity means is provided with a plurality of pre-defined and pre-stored operating characteristic configurations for the portable radio communication device, and the sensor comprises a reader for reading said operating characteristics of

said identity means, whereby the identity means causes the processor to change the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device by selecting one or more of the plurality of said operating characteristic configurations.

5. A removable housing cover according to claim 1, wherein the identity means allows the portable radio communication device to access a pre-determined server or network and to download therefrom data comprising operating characteristic configurations for the portable radio communication device.

6. A removable housing cover according to claim 5, wherein the pre-determined server or network corresponds to an internet website.

7. A removable housing cover according to any preceding claim, wherein the identity means comprises one or more mechanical pegs and the sensor comprises contacts operable to sense the presence or absence of pre-defined combinations of said one or more pegs.

8. A removable housing cover according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the identity means comprises an electrical resistance means and the sensor comprises a potential divider operable to sense the electrical resistance means.

9. A removable housing cover according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the identity means comprises a memory or processor chip and the sensor comprises a reader for reading said memory or processor chip.

10. A removable housing cover according to any preceding claim, wherein the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device comprise one or more of:

-ring tones and/or musical alerts;

- animations/screen savers;
- mode;
- bookmarks and/or browser preferences;
- phone memory preferences;
- games and/or game elements;
- UI screen colours and/or UI style;
- input method;
- audio set-up;
- default messages;
- display language;
- agents and/or agent set-up;
- security keys;
- push message filters and/or accounts;
- enabling of set-up and/or configuration settings;
- sensor weighting;
- outgoing call restrictions.

11. A housing cover for a portable radio communication device with a sensor, the housing cover comprising:

an attaching means for removably attaching the cover to the portable radio communication device;

an identity means, such that, when the housing cover is mounted on the portable radio communication device, the identity means is coupled with the sensor of the portable radio communication device, wherein the internal functionality of the portable radio communication device is dependent on the identity means.

12. A housing cover according to claim 11, wherein the identity means has associated with it a Profiles setting indicative of a pre-defined operation state of the device, such that mounting the cover on a portable radio communications device changes the Profiles setting of the device in accordance with the Profile setting associated with the cover.

13. A housing cover according to claim 12, wherein a selected removable cover having an associated Profiles setting is in use located on the portable radio communication device and controls the operating characteristics of the portable radio communication device so as to be set to the corresponding Profiles setting.

14. A removable housing cover according to claim 1, wherein the removable cover carries indicia and graphics thereon, and the removable housing cover covers all or a part of the radio communication device.

15. A portable radio communication device having a removable housing cover, the portable radio communication device comprising:

a sensor; and

a processor for controlling the operating characteristics of the device, and the removable housing cover comprising an identity means, the removable housing cover being configured to be mounted on and attached to the portable radio communication device, in which arrangement the sensor of the portable radio communication device is operable to sense the identity means of the removable housing cover and provide an input to the processor of a sensed feature of the identity means, such that the processor is controlled to alter one or more of the operating characteristics in accordance with the sensed feature of the identity means.

16. A portable radio communication device according to claim 15, wherein the portable radio communication device includes a plurality of the pre-defined operating characteristics each of said operating characteristics being associated with a corresponding Profiles setting, and wherein a plurality of removal covers are associated with respective Profiles Setting, such that installation of a removable cover on the portable radio communication device activates the corresponding Profiles setting.

FIG. 2

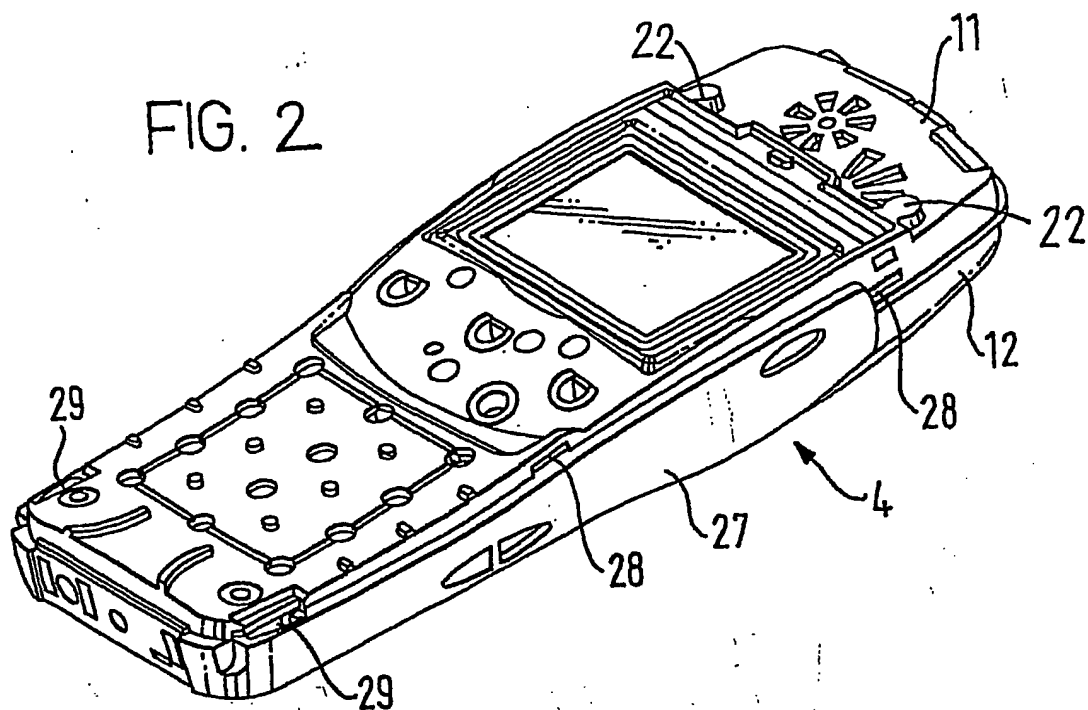
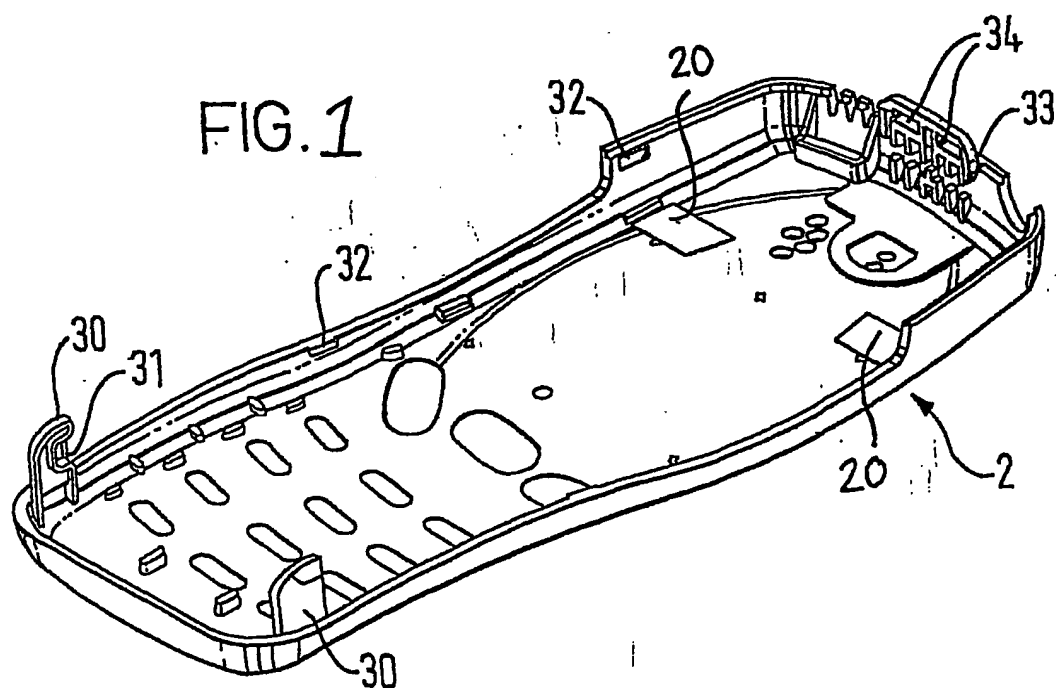


FIG. 1



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 7 H04M1/02 H04M1/725

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 H04M

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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X	WO 97 44912 A (ERICSSON GE MOBILE INC (US)) 27 November 1997 (1997-11-27) page 4, line 20 -page 14, line 7; figures 1-11	1-4, 7-16
X	US 5 023 936 A (SZCZUTKOWSKI ET AL) 11 June 1991 (1991-06-11) column 8, line 54 -column 16, line 37; figures 1-9	1-4, 7, 9-16
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	-/-	

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

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Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
 Tel (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx 31 651 epo nl,
 Fax (+31-70) 340-3016

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Delangue, P

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/EP 01/04906

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
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